

REMARKS

Applicants' attorney thanks the Examiner for her comments, and for her thoughtful analysis of the prior art. Independent Claim 14 has been amended to recite a pant-like disposable absorbent garment. As illustrated in Figs. 1-3, and on page 2 of the specification, a pant-like absorbent garment is a garment having a pre-fastened pant-like configuration, in which side panels 6 and 8 are bonded during manufacture to both the front portion 5 and the back portion 7 of the garment chassis. The term "pant-like absorbent garment" includes child training pants, absorbent swim wear, adult incontinence garments and the like which have a pre-fastened (manufactured) pant-like configuration. (1)

The term "pant-like absorbent garment" does not include infant diapers and similar articles in which side ear panels or flaps are pre-fastened only to the front portion or back portion of the chassis, but not both. Diapers and similar articles which can be closed and then opened at the sides using refastenable fastening devices are not pant-like absorbent articles as recited in Claim 14.

To further clarify the invention, Claim 1 has also been amended to indicate that the first seamless side panel is bonded to a first edge of a front portion of the chassis and a first edge of the back portion of the chassis using bonds to both first edges selected from the group consisting of adhesive bonds, thermal bonds, ultrasonic bonds, stitch bonds, and combinations thereof. The second seamless single-piece side panel is bonded to a second edge of the front portion of the chassis and a second edge of the back portion of the chassis using bonds to both second edges selected from the same Markush group. All of the recited bond types are permanent bonds, i.e., bonds which cannot be opened without damaging the garment, and cannot be re-fastened during use of the garment.

Fig. 4 illustrates the apparatus and process used to make the pant-like disposable absorbent garment of the invention. It is apparent from Fig. 4 and the associated description that the apparatus produces a garment whose seamless side panels are bonded to both the front and back portions of the garment chassis using identical bonds.

The Examiner rejected Claims 14-27 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,496,298 to Kuepper et al. Applicants believe that this rejection has been overcome. Kuepper et al. is directed to an absorbent article having a pair of elastomeric ears pre-fastened and attached only to a rear portion of the article during manufacture. A fastener is attached to each of the elastomeric ears for releasably connecting the ears to a front portion of the article during subsequent use (Col. 1, lines 53-58). Because the ears are not pre-fastened to both the front and rear portions of the chassis, Kuepper does not disclose a pant-like absorbent garment as recited in Claim 14, including first and second seamless, single-piece side panels bonded to both a first edge of a front portion of the garment chassis and a first edge of the back portion of the garment chassis.

The Examiner cites Col. 1, lines 9-11 of Kuepper et al. as disclosing training pants, adult incontinence garments and the like. That passage is in the “background” (prior art) discussion, and indicates only that such garments are known. Kuepper et al. does not disclose a pant-like absorbent garment having seamless, single-piece side panels. Instead, the ear panels disclosed in Kuepper et al. are illustrated and described only as part of a diaper, wherein the ear panels are fastenable (i.e., not permanently connected) to a front portion of the garment (Col. 1, lines 53-58, Col. 2, lines 6-8, Figs. 1 and 7).

Furthermore, ear panels having a fastening device, such as element 30 shown in Figs. 1 and 7 of Kuepper et al., are not “single-piece” side panels as recited in

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Docket No.: KCC-13,555.1

Applicants' Claim 14. The term "single-piece" side panel precludes the inclusion of an additional fastening device on each side panel.

Applicants believe that the claims, as now presented, are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner feels that any issues remain unresolved, then Applicants' attorney respectfully requests a telephone call from the Examiner, and a telephone interview.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maxwell J. Petersen".

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